24 October 1968

Professor John K. Lattimer
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Dear Dr. Lattimer,

In the light of our exchange of letters in February 1967, I read with particular interest the story in today's New York Post reporting your address at the International College of Surgeons' Museum and Hall of Fame at Chicago ("Doctor Says One Bullet Hit JFK and Connally").

I am hesitant to comment on the basis of a press report that may be inaccurate or incomplete on the arguments you have presented in support of the single-bullet theory and the conclusions set forth in the Warren Report. I should therefore be grateful to receive the full text of your speech at Chicago, if that is possible.

Meanwhile, I may perhaps mention some immediate reactions to the thesis you reportedly presented. You claim that the stretcher bullet was, in fact, deformed. The flattened side must have been turned away from the camera, then, for photographs of the stretcher bullet show it to be undeformed and indistinguishable from the test bullets fired into cotton (see Six Seconds in Dallas by J. D. Thompson, page 152).

You state that the first bullet fired hit a tree branch, but the news story does not indicate what evidence you presented in support of your conclusion. Perhaps I will find that in the text of your speech, so I leave the question aside for the moment. However, I must take issue with your assertion that the second shot struck the back of the President's neck and "came out at the knot of his tie." The bullet in question entered the back, not the back of the neck, about four inches below the top of the collar, as conclusively shown by the holes in the shirt and coat and by the autopsy surgeons' measurement of 5½ inches below the tip of the right mastoid process of the prone body. Since the President was erect when shot, the actual distance from the tip of the right mastoid process is greater by about 2 inches--this you can easily confirm by experiment. Therefore, the bullet in question could not exit at the knot of the tie unless it was on an upward path of flight.

There is considerable evidence against your conclusion that one bullet inflicted all of Connally's wounds. Connally's physicians at Parkland Hospital, after viewing the stretcher bullet, expressed serious doubt that it had produced all his wounds. Drs. Light and Dolce of the U.S. Army Edgewood Arsenal "expressed themselves as being very strongly of the opinion that Connally had been hit by two different bullets" (WCD, page 206). The CBS-TV News Inquiry on the Warren Report (June 1967) conducted wound penetration tests using gelatin and masonite to simulate the path ascribed to the stretcher bullet by the Warren Commission. Although the CBS tests omitted simulation of the rib, not one of their test bullets completed all the penetrations. Some failed to penetrate the simulated wrist; not one penetrated the simulated thigh. CBS failed to display any of the test bullets, and denied my request for photographs or detailed descriptions from which I might compare their condition with that of the stretcher bullet.

Your contention that the bullet in question could penetrate four feet of wood is certainly arresting, when it could not penetrate masonite in the CBS tests, or just managed to do so and drop out on the other side completely spent. The press report does not mention the condition in which your test bullet(s) emerged from four feet of wood; It is perhaps safe to assume they did not resemble the stretcher bullet.

In discussing the fatal head shot, you seem not to have acknowledged or discussed the introvertible evidence that the bullet that struck the head thrust the President very forcefully backward and to the left (see SSD, Chapter 5; The Case for Three Assassins by Lifton and Welsh, Ramparts, January 1967; or Accessories After the Fact, pp. 159-165). No one has yet been able to refute my colleagues' and my conclusion that this shot came from the front and right of the car, although the evidence and arguments have been on record for at least a year. I would find it incomprehensible if any serious scholar discussed the fatal head shot without addressing himself to the widely-published evidence that the bullet came from the right front and not from the Depository.

If I was nonplused by your four feet of wood, I am really awed by your experience as a rifleman. You got three hits in a target head (moving target?) in 6½ seconds, although you are an amateur or believe that any amateur could do as well. That casts a most mortifying reflection on the Commission's three master riflemen and on CBS-TV's eleven expert marksmen.

The Commission's three master riflemen fired six series of three shots, five of which failed to match your accuracy or speed. CBS-TV's eleven experts fired 37 series of three shots, with an over-all average of less than one hit per series. Of the 20 series fired within the constraint of 7.5 seconds, the average was 1.2 hits for each three shots fired.

If you, a non-professional, succeeded where so many rifle champions failed, I can only hope that you were nowhere near Dallas on November 22nd five years ago!

I look forward to an opportunity of seeing your paper in its entirety and will of course withdraw any comments based on the newspaper story which may be unwarranted in terms of the full text.

Yours sincerely,

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